

submitted with the application. In complying with the Office's request, it was necessary to divide some of the original figures into multiple sheets and renumber those figures.

Specifically:

original FIG. 5 was divided into FIGS. 5A and 5B;

original FIG. 7 was divided into FIGS. 7A and 7B;

original FIG. 8 was divided into FIGS 8A and 8B;

original FIG. 9A was divided into FIGS. 9A and 9B;

original FIG 9B was changed to FIG. 9C;

original FIGS 10A and 10B were divided into FIGS. 10A, 10B and 10C;

original FIGS. 11A and 11B were divided into FIGS. 11A, 11B and 11C; and

original FIGS. 12A and 12B were divided into FIGS. 12A, 12B and 12C.

Accordingly, it was also necessary to correct nineteen paragraphs of the specification to correspond to the revised reference numbers for the figures. The corrections to the specification were made solely for the purpose of fixing obvious errors that were created when the reference numbers for the figures were changed. No new matter was introduced into the specification or the drawings as a result of dividing the drawings or correcting the specification to account for the revised drawings, and their entry is respectfully requested.

In addition, page 28 of the specification, as originally filed, inadvertently contained a typographical error in that there was a paragraph that was numbered "00100" immediately followed by a paragraph numbered "0100." To avoid any confusion that may result from the inadvertent mis-numbering of these two paragraphs, the applicant requests that these paragraphs be renumbered as paragraphs "0100A" and "0100B."

Finally, applicant has corrected three typographical errors in FIG. 4. In the original FIG. 4, reference number 410 erroneously pointed to the wrong drawing element (Main Memory) and reference number 408 appeared twice. In the corrected drawings, reference

number 410 now points to the appropriate drawing element (secondary memory) and the second instance of reference number 408 has been changed to 412. No new matter was added to the specification as a result of correcting the typographical errors in the paragraph numbering and FIG. 4, and entry of these changes is also respectfully requested.

Attached hereto is a marked-up version of the changes made to the specification by the current amendment. The attached pages are captioned, "Amended Paragraphs with Markings to Show Changes Made." The changes are shown by strike-throughs (for deleted matter) and underlining (for added matter).

CONCLUSION

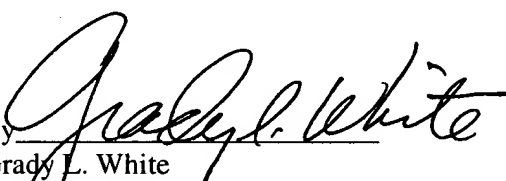
Prompt and favorable consideration of this Preliminary Amendment is respectfully requested.

Dated:

Aug. 27, 2001

Respectfully submitted,

By


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Amended Paragraphs With Markings to Show Changes Made

Please amend paragraph 0030 of the specification to read as follows:

[0030] ~~FIG. 5 depicts~~ FIGS. 5A and 5B depict an exemplary embodiment of a database structure, which can be used in the present invention to store bidding session-related data.

Please amend paragraph 0032 of the specification to read as follows:

[0032] ~~FIG. 7 depicts~~ FIGS. 7A and 7B depict an exemplary embodiment of the a user interface screen displayed on a CRT display or other display, which can be used in the present invention to set up bidding sessions.

Please amend paragraph 0033 of the specification to read as follows:

[0033] ~~FIG. 8 depicts~~ FIGS. 8A and 8B depict an exemplary embodiment of a user interface screen which can be used in the present invention to provide team members the ability to grant access to other team members and pre-qualified bidders.

Please amend paragraph 0034 of the specification to read as follows:

[0034] FIGS. 9A, 9B and 9C depict an exemplary embodiment of a user interface screen which can be used in the present invention to set up a single-product, single-round bidding session.

Please amend paragraph 0035 of the specification to read as follows:

[0035] FIGS. 10A and 10B and 10C depict an exemplary embodiment of a user interface screen which can be used with the present invention to set up a single-product, double-round bidding session.

Please amend paragraph 0036 of the specification to read as follows:

[0036] FIGS. 11A and 11B and 11C depict an exemplary embodiment of a user interface screen which can be used with the present invention to set up a multiple-product, single-round bidding session.

Please amend paragraph 0037 of the specification to read as follows:

[0037] FIGS. 12A ~~and~~, 12B and 12C depict an exemplary embodiment of a user interface screen which can be used with the present invention to set up a multiple-product, double-round bidding session.

Please amend paragraph 0083 of the specification to read as follows:

[0083] An exemplary database structure suitable for use in a preferred embodiment of the present invention is illustrated in ~~FIG. 5~~ FIGS. 5A and 5B. The database structure comprises database tables designed to accommodate key pieces of bidding session-related data for one embodiment of the invention. For example, a product table 506 is included, which contains information about the products being put to bid, such as product name, product description, quantity and lot requirements. Also included is a user table 512, which contains information about users of the system, such as User ID, password, e-mail address, first and last name and contact information. In a preferred embodiment, a bid session table 514 contains records relevant to an individual bid session, including, for example, a bid description, starting time, ending time, delivery requirements, number of rounds, contract value, etc. The database structure also comprises: a codebook table 502, for keeping track of information about certain codes; a savings/history table 504, for keeping track of actual and targeted savings for certain products and industries; a round information table 508, for keeping track of bidding round information, such as the current round number and the number of bidders in each round; and a team table 510, for storing information about the client, the industry and the certain project start and end dates. The embodiment of the database structure depicted in ~~FIG. 5~~ FIGS. 5A and 5B also includes separate tables for system key parameters 516, bidders 518, administrators 520, bidding activity 522, bidding activity detail 524 and session history 526. For efficient search and retrieval of the database, in a preferred embodiment, the database structure is configured such that a number of these tables are defined in such a way as to create a one-to-many relationship with other tables within the structure. In the embodiment shown in ~~FIG. 5~~ FIGS. 5A and 5B, these one-to-many links are illustrated with arrows 507, 509, 511, 513, 517, 519, 521, 523 and 525.

Please amend paragraph 0085 of the specification to read as follows:

[0085] Once the website administrator has granted team leaders access to the system, they may, in the preferred embodiment, view a Team Home Screen 700, as depicted by ~~FIG. 7~~ FIGS. 7A and 7B. As can be seen in ~~FIG. 7~~ FIGS. 7A and 7B, the Team Home Screen 700

serves as the main access point for all of the functions available to team members in the preferred embodiment of the present invention. From this screen, the team member may choose from a variety of bidding session administrative functions by selecting certain buttons displayed on the screen. The team member, may, for example, authorize new team members and pre-qualified bidders, see benchmarks from other bidding sessions, or set up new single-product or multi-product bidding sessions by selecting one of the links in the section indicated by reference 702 in FIG. 7 7A. The team member may also view information concerning previously-created bidding sessions by selecting one of the links in the section of the screen indicated by reference number 704 of Team Home Screen 700. In the preferred embodiment, bidding sessions are organized into three groups based on the user's access rights and displayed accordingly. For example, all of the bidding sessions for which the team member is an owner (a team member who creates a bidding session is considered the bidding session's owner) are shown in the section of Team Home Screen 700 designated by 706. Likewise, the bidding sessions that a team member may modify can be shown at section 708, and the bidding sessions that the team member may monitor may be shown at section 710.

Please amend paragraph 0087 of the specification to read as follows:

[0087] In a preferred embodiment of the present invention, the team leader may authorize other team members and pre-qualified bidders through the use of a computer screen resembling FIG. 8 FIGS. 8A and 8B. By giving team leaders the authority to grant access to other users, the bidding session administrator is relieved of much of the burden of administration. Through the screen depicted in FIG. 8 FIGS. 8A and 8B, for example, team leaders can access additional screens to perform a number of administrative functions, such as creating a new User ID and password for a new bidder (see section 802 of FIG. 8) 8A, create a new User ID and password for a new team member (section 804), view the list of authorized bidders (section 806), or view the list of authorized team members (section 808).

Please amend paragraph 0088 of the specification to read as follows:

[0088] A team member can set up a single-product, single-round bidding session by using a screen like the one depicted in FIGS. 9A, 9B and 9B 9C. In a preferred embodiment, this screen allows the team member to specify all aspects of conducting the bidding session. A field (indicated in FIG. 9A by reference number 902) is provided on this screen, for example, for the user to enter details about the product being put to bid (e.g., product, quantity, etc.) In

a preferred embodiment, the user's selection from the "Required Quantity" drop-down menu 904 is automatically displayed in the "Bidding Unit" field 906 after the word "per." The user has the option of specifying the starting price and minimum bid increments bidders must observe, as depicted in FIG. 9A 9B by reference numbers 911 and 912. The "Attach detailed specifications & requirements" link 914 (FIG. 9A) functions to allow the user to attach a file to provide additional details about the product. The user may also specify details about the contract (e.g., duration, delivery requirements, performance penalties, etc.) in the Contract Details section of the screen (see reference number 916).

Please amend paragraph 0089 of the specification to read as follows:

[0089] Bidding details (e.g., date and time, bidding objective, fixed vs. variable ending time, etc.) are defined for the bidding session by completing the section entitled "Bidding Details" 918. The "Bid objective" drop down menu (920 on FIG. 9A) 9B) indicates the direction of the bidding. "Minimize buying price" indicates that the objective is to get to the lowest bid (i.e., we are helping a buyer purchase something at the lowest price), and "Maximize selling price" indicates that the objective is to get to the highest bid. The "Allow bidders to see actual bid amounts" menu 922 is a "yes-no" pop-up menu that determines whether the actual prices submitted by bidders will be shown to the bidders during the bidding session.

Please amend paragraph 0090 of the specification to read as follows:

[0090] Bidding round parameters (e.g., number of rounds, number of qualifiers for each round, number of winners, date and time for subsequent rounds, etc.) can be entered in the "Bidding Details" section (918 in FIG. 9A) 9B) and the "Bidding Rounds" section 924 of this screen. In a preferred embodiment, users have the flexibility of conducting sessions that extend to multiple rounds (e.g., the lowest few bidders from one round are invited to participate in a second round of bidding). A "Number of rounds" field 909 indicates how many rounds will take place in a bidding session. In a preferred embodiment, the default is 1. If there is more than 1 round, a "Number of winners in final round" field 910 determines how many bidders will be asked to join the final round.

Please amend paragraph 0092 of the specification to read as follows:

[0092] A “Bidding date and time” field (927 in FIG. 9A) 9B) determines when the round will take place. The “Automatically notify qualifiers/winners” field 934 determines whether bidders will automatically receive a message at the end of a round indicating if they have won or qualified for the next round. The “Message to qualifiers/winners” field 936 and “Message to non-qualifiers” field 938 provide the text to display if the “Automatically notify qualifiers” field 934 is activated.

Please amend paragraph 0093 of the specification to read as follows:

[0093] With reference now to FIG. 9B 9C, the user authorizes participants by clicking on the “Add more authorized bidders” link 940, which causes the system to search user database to retrieve the bidding company name, user name, and/or contact number for the bidders already pre-qualified by the team. The user selects from among pre-qualified bidders to authorize their participation in this bidding session. To allow access to this bidding session for other team members, the user clicks on the “Add more authorized team members” field 944, which causes the system to display a list of team members with access to the system. The authorization drop-down menu 946 is used to provide access and modify the rights of team members. If “Modify” is selected, team members are allowed to update the bidding session. If “Monitor” is selected, team members are allowed to preview the session’s settings and enter the bidding room through the “Bidding Monitor” page (discussed below with reference to FIGS. 15A and 15B).

Please amend paragraph 0095 of the specification to read as follows:

[0095] A single-product, multiple-round bidding session may be created in a preferred embodiment by using a setup screen similar to the one depicted in FIGS. 10A ~~and~~, 10B and 10C. This screen is essentially the same as the exemplary single-product, single-round screen depicted in FIGS. 9A, 9B and ~~9B~~ 9C, except that this screen provides the ability to input details on more than one round. When the number of rounds is set to be two or more (reference 909 in FIG. ~~9A~~) 9B), the system adds a section to allow the user to specify how subsequent rounds will be conducted (reference number 1002 in FIG. 10B). Two options are available for specifying when round 2 will be conducted. If a specific date and time is provided, the system automatically creates another bidding session, which will begin at the specified date and time, and which will have same settings as the prior round. But only the bidders who qualify are allowed to proceed. If, on the other hand, “Immediately following

the prior” is selected, the system automatically starts another bidding session with same settings, immediately after prior round. Again, only qualified bidders will be allowed to proceed.

Please amend paragraph 0096 of the specification to read as follows:

[0096] A multi-product, single-round bidding session may be created in a preferred embodiment of the present invention via a screen resembling the one depicted in FIGS. 11A and, 11B and 11C. This screen is essentially the same as the exemplary single-product screens depicted in FIGS. 9A, 9B and 9C, except that this screen contains input fields to specify details on more than one product (see the dialog boxes indicated by reference numbers 1102 and 1104 in FIG. 11A), with the default being 2 products. Clicking on the “Add another product” field 1106 brings up another dialog box to add another product.

Please amend paragraph 0098 of the specification to read as follows:

[0098] FIGS. 12A and, 12B and 12C depict an exemplary user interface screen for setting up a multiple product, double-round bidding session. This screen is essentially identical to the multiple-product, single-round setup screen shown in FIGS. 11A and, 11B and 11C, except that it contains a dialog box (indicated by reference number 1202 in FIG. 12B) 12A) for inputting details for an additional round of bidding.

Please amend paragraph 00100 of the specification to read as follows:

[00100A] At the appointed date and time, the bidder can participate in a bidding session by clicking on “Enter bidding room” 1306 in FIG. 13. He or she is presented with one of the “bidding rooms” depicted by FIGS. 14A, 14B and 14C. FIG. 14A shows a bidding room for a single-product bidding session. FIG. 14B shows a single-product bidding room for a bidding session operating in “price blind” mode. And FIG. 14C shows a bidding room for multiple products. In a preferred embodiment, if a bidder enters a bidding room prior to the bidding time, the indicator displays “Bidding will start in” and the amount of time until the start of bidding.

Please amend paragraph 0100 of the specifications to read as follows:

[0100B] In a preferred embodiment, a bid is entered by typing a value in the bid field and pressing the "Bid" button (depicted, for example, as 1402 in FIG. 14A). When a bidder enters a new bid, the system checks the validity of the bid. If a value was entered in the "Starting Bid" field (911 in FIG. 9A) 9B) during the setup process and the "Bid objective" field (920 in FIG. 9A) 9B) is set to "Minimize buying price," then the first bid must be less than or equal to value specified in "Starting Bid" field 911. If the "Bid Objective" field 920 was set to "Maximize selling price," then the value entered must be greater than or equal to the value specified in the "Starting Bid" field 911 during setup.